

Labour's call for The Scottish Parliament to 'lead by example' resisted

Scottish Labour says that The Scottish Parliament must lead by example in the fight against coronavirus and schedule business in such a way to protect staff and members.

Scottish Labour will vote against the proposed business in The Scottish Parliament today, as it proposes to deal with legislation which is not urgent, rather than to debate Scotland's response to coronavirus.

The party says that in accordance with the official advice, people should only be attending their place of work when that work is essential to the response to the pandemic. Added to that, this legislation has been programmed to take place over two half day sittings in the chamber rather than a single day sitting, thus increasing the amount of time staff and members are forced to be in physical contact.

By scheduling two half days, the parliament is also increasing the number of journeys made by staff and members to get to parliament, thus increasing the chances of exposure to, and transmission of, the virus.

Scottish Labour Business Manager Elaine Smith said: "From the beginning of this pandemic Scottish Labour has pushed for the parliament to take action to allow parliamentary scrutiny to take place virtually while ensuring that staff and members are

kept safe.

“It is vital that parliamentary scrutiny continues to take place but the immediate challenge that the parliament faces is the coronavirus pandemic and, as such, the parliament’s legislative focus must be on that.

“The Scottish Parliament must lead by example. The use of virtual committees must be expanded before normal legislative business can be resumed.

“Parliamentary scrutiny must continue, but for as long as the lockdown is maintained coronavirus must be the principal subject of the parliament’s business.”

Scottish Labour Chief Whip, Rhoda Grant, added: “We cannot return to business as usual in this chamber when we are asking that others only undertake work crucial to the coronavirus response.

“Frankly, do as I say, not as I do, is wearing thin and if we do not lead by example we run the risk of undermining the progress made during the lockdown.”

Graeme Day Minister for Parliamentary Business supported the government motion and said: “This is a positive step back to considering other business. Members will have ample opportunity over coming weeks to focus on the coronavirus pandemic.”

The motion was passed by parliament who will consider business other than the pandemic at Holyrood next week.

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